

Remarks Following Discussions With President Jalal Talabani of Iraq in  
New York City  
*September 19, 2006*

*President Bush.* I want to thank the President of Iraq for joining us. President Talabani, you and your colleagues here have given us time so we can strategize together to help you succeed, help you become a democracy, a country that can sustain itself and govern itself and defend itself, in the heart of the Middle East.

I want to congratulate the Iraqi people on your courage. These are tough times. There is still violence in your midst because extremists want to stop the advance of a free society. We spent time strategizing on how we can continue to help the Iraqi Government provide security for her people. It's not only security that comes from troops but security that comes from economic vitality.

We had a very good meeting yesterday on the compact for Iraq. The international community came and listened very carefully to the Iraqi Government's proposals and pledged support for this new democracy, and that ought to hearten the Iraqi people. I made it very clear to the President that it's important for the Government of Iraq to continue to make very difficult decisions so that the people of Iraq see progress, to see different political parties capable of working together for the good of the country and for the good of the people. I'm optimistic that this Government will succeed. And I've told the President of Iraq that America has given her word to help you, and we will keep our word. The people of Iraq must know that.

I spoke today at the United Nations, and in my speech, I spoke directly to the people of Iraq. I wanted them to know that we're thinking about them during this difficult period of time. I want them to know we appreciate their courage. And I want them to know that the United States of America stands with them, so long as the Govern-

ment continues to make the tough choices necessary for peace to prevail.

So, Mr. President, thank you for coming again. I appreciate your time. I appreciate your longstanding courage and support for freedom and liberty. History will judge you kindly, Mr. President, when they look back and realize that under your leadership, a new democracy began to flourish in the heart of the Middle East, called Iraq.

Welcome.

*President Talabani.* Thank you. Today we were honored to meet President Bush, who we consider him as the hero of liberation of Iraq and who we are—very much appreciate the sacrifice of brave American Army, those who gave their life to liberate our country from the worst kind of dictatorship, which left behind mass graves with hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis in it. And the liberation of Iraq from this kind of dictatorship opened the door for Iraqi people to enjoy democracy, human rights, and all kinds of liberties, and to have free election, the National Assembly then elects the Presidency and Speaker and Prime Minister, and to have national unity, a Government headed by Dr. Maliki.

This Government is representing main portions of Iraqi people, of course Arabs, Sunnis, Shi'as, Turkomans, Christians, Muslims, everyone represented in this Government, and is working well for national reconciliation. I briefed his Excellency, President, about the steps we have taken towards implementing—implementation of national reconciliation program. And also, I told him that we are trying to do our best to remove all obstacles in the way of national reconciliation, to try to review some of those like de-Ba'athification and look to the amendment of a Constitution and also try to have some kind of discussion, free discussion about federation and

some other issues. We have also our roadmap in Iraq, which was decided by a political council of national security for solving other problems of Iraqi people.

We, again, expressed our gratitude to his Excellency, our dear friend, President George Bush, and to American people. We hope that America also understand that we are grateful to them, to the America, and we will never forget those friends who helped us in the difficult days of Iraq, and Iraq will be always in the future in very good relation and be the friend of the

United States and partner of United States in fighting against tyranny, dictatorship, and terrorism. You can count on the Iraqi people, Mr. President, in fighting against terrorism and for democratization of whole Middle East.

*President Bush.* Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. President Talabani referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Statement on Senate Passage of the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement

*September 19, 2006*

I commend the Senate for passing the U.S.-Oman free trade agreement, which will deliver benefits to both America and Oman. This agreement will level the playing field for U.S. workers and businesses, provide additional market access for U.S. goods, help Oman's leaders develop long-term opportunities for their people, and ad-

vance our shared goal of building a Middle East free trade area.

By strengthening our relations with a strategic friend and ally in the Middle East, this important agreement will also help protect America's national security interests.

I look forward to signing this legislation into law.

## Statement on Senate Confirmation of Alice S. Fisher as Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice

*September 19, 2006*

I am pleased that the Senate acted today to confirm Alice S. Fisher as Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice.

Alice is a talented and effective public servant. As Acting Assistant Attorney General, she has led hundreds of DOJ attorneys and other staff in their efforts to combat terrorism, gang violence, drug trafficking,

corruption, fraud, and crimes against children. I am confident she will continue to dedicate herself to keeping Americans safe from crime and bringing those who violate our laws to justice.

I continue to encourage the Senate to provide all of my nominees a prompt up-or-down vote.